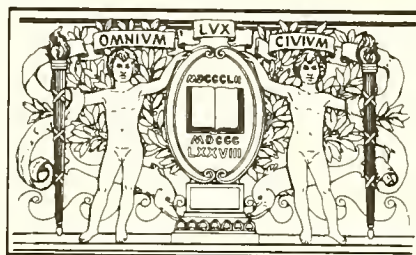


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ANALYSIS OF ROXBURY ACTION PROGRAM'S (RAP)
PROPOSAL FOR
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN JOHN ELLIOTT SQUARE

Boston Redevelopment Authority
Planning Department

February, 1974

100-1
100-4

FEB 26 1974

Mr. George Morrisson
Roxbury Action Program
10 Linwood Street
Roxbury, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Morrison:

It was a pleasure meeting both you and Mr. King on January 21 to discuss your housing program for RAP-UP-II-A and III as well as your request for public improvements in John Eliot Square.

We have reviewed your public improvements proposal and are in general agreement with its major elements. A complete analysis is attached for your perusal.

In summary, we believe that the pedestrian plaza in front of RAP-UP-IIA should be pursued, but we cannot make a final determination as to its feasibility until the street alignments in the area have been determined, specifically the proposed dead-ending of Roxbury and Dudley Streets. Once these closings have been finalized, which we expect in two to three years, we can begin work on determining the feasibility of the plaza. In the meantime, however, we believe that street lighting, tree planting and new sidewalks should be constructed along Dudley Street, as an initial City commitment to RAP-UP IIA.

Secondly, we believe that a park is an appropriate use for the land east of the Dillaway Thomas House, but that active, rather than passive recreation should be provided for use by the Timilty School. Third, in analyzing your request for off-street parking we can not find cause for constructing this use in that area since there is no demand from a public use or commercial area. I should point out that the parking area indicated on the Campus High Site Plan was for the church immediately to the east.

Fourth, we are in complete agreement that the Dillaway Thomas House should be rehabilitated and have already begun to work towards that end.

Finally, we believe that your development program will be an important factor in the rehabilitation of the Highland Park/John Eliot Square Area and we look forward to continued work with you on this and other projects.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Kenney
Director

RTK/jw/A/980
Attachment.

Mr. Robert Vey, Director
Public Facilities Department
City Hall
Boston, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Vey:

We have reviewed a request by the Roxbury Action Program (RAP) for public improvements in the John Eliot Square section of Roxbury. Our review is attached for your information. John Eliot Square is designated as a Landmark District and has several notable structures within it. The Square is officially within the Campus High Project but in an area for which monies have not been appropriated. Boston 200 is working on establishing John Eliot Square as a major attraction for Bicentennial activities for the Black community.

RAP has requested that the City leverage their commitment to build 142 housing units and 10,000 square feet of retail space by building a plaza in front of their project at an estimated cost of \$141,000. Although we believe that the concept of a plaza is valid, its feasibility cannot be determined until proposed street closings at Roxbury and Dudley Streets have been finalized. Therefore, we believe that this item should be set aside at the present time, but should be restudied when the specifics of street closings are known and pursued if the proposed plaza concept is in conformity with future street patterns. In the interim, however, we believe the City could commit certain improvements to the area in front of the RAP project. Initially \$20,000 was set aside for improvements in the square and we would hope that this money could be designated for street lighting and tree planting on Dudley Street.

They also requested that a recreation area be constructed to the north of the square, next to the Dillaway Thomas House. This is in conformance with the Campus High Plan which designated the area in question as a recreation area for the Timilty School. We believe the present request is still valid and request that it be considered in the 1976 budget.

Lastly, RAP has requested that the Dillaway Thomas House be rehabilitated, which although not stated, was implied by the Site Plan of the Campus High Project. I have recently been apprised that the Massachusetts Historical Commission has allocated \$25,000 matching funds and that the City is now prepared to allocate its share.

Sincerely,

Robert T. Kenney
Director

RTK/jw/A/979

Attachment.

ANALYSIS OF ROXBURY ACTION PROGRAM'S (RAP) PROPOSAL
FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN JOHN ELIOT SQUARE

PERSPECTIVE

In July, 1973, at the request of Boston 200 the District Planning staff of the B.R.A. prepared a list of needed capital improvements for areas of potential Bi-Centennial attraction. One of those areas was John Eliot Square, Roxbury for which new lighting for the First Unitarian Church was requested. In regard to John Eliot Square, it was stated that further improvements to the Square should be made only in light of further activity in the area and in accordance with a plan for the entire square.

John Eliot Square is within the Campus High Urban Renewal Area and thus, has an officially adopted plan which indicates the retention of the Dillaway Thomas House with a park located next to it. No specific mention is made of improvements along Roxbury or Dudley Street. However, it can be assumed that new public improvements such as street lighting would have been included. Unfortunately, due to HUD funding problems within the project, the area south of New Dudley Street including John Eliot Square has had no funding allocated for it, even though it remains within the project.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

Since the original submission to Boston 200 in July, the Kittredge Square Urban Renewal Project and the RAP-UP IIA Project, have been

approved and will be in construction by this spring. The Kittredge Square Project will invest \$2.2 million in new capital improvements including streets, sidewalks, lighting and parks. An additional \$2.5 million will be spent on 220 new and rehabilitated dwelling units. RAP-UP IIA, to be constructed adjacent to and north of the Kittredge Square Project (See Map-Area Activity), will build 142 dwelling units and 10,000 square feet of retail space at a total investment of approximately \$4,000,000.

North of John Eliot Square, is the site of the Occupational Resource Center (ORC) and Madison Park high school with a total enrollment of 5,000 students at a cost of approximately \$50,000,000. Construction on Madison Park is expected to begin this spring. The ORC subject to approval by the School Committee and State is expected to begin in two years. New Dudley Street, portions of which have been constructed, will eventually become the major access between the new arterial in the Southwest Corridor and Dudley Station. Again, because of funding problems it does not appear that New Dudley Street will be complete for another 3-4 years.

Further in the future are the transportation and related developments in the Southwest Corridor, which have not yet been fully determined and which will be constructed by approximately 1980.

CURRENT PROPOSAL FOR JOHN ELIOT SQUARE

During late summer and early fall a series of meetings were held among staff of RAP, Boston 200 and B.R.A. District Planning in an attempt to develop a program for the square which would demonstrate RAP's program and proposals and the need for public improvements. The current proposal for Public Improvements was submitted by RAP to BRA District Planning for review.

An analysis of each of these follows:

Plaza on Dudley Street

The RAP plan indicates Dudley Street (old) would be closed from Highland Street to Putnam Street. Bartlett Street would be closed as far as Blanchard Street. The closing would provide a pedestrian space between RAP-UP-IIA and the green in front of the First Unitarian Church. Major elements of the plaza are:

1. New street lighting
2. Resurfacing
3. Benches

There are two unresolved issues concerning the plaza. First, fire access to the residential area to the east would be nearly impossible and second, there is uncertainty of the future traffic pattern which currently calls for dead ending Dudley Street (old) where New Dudley Street enters the Dudley Station Area and the proposed closing of Roxbury Street at the Southwest Corridor.

Once these issues have been resolved such a street closing would be acceptable if it permitted fire vehicles through access.

Park

Both RAP's and the BRA (Campus High Site Plan) call for a park next to the Timilty School. There is an existing residential structure which has three occupied units and a vacant structure on this site. The RAP plan indicates both would be taken.

The major issue here is one of usership. A passive park in this location makes little sense, especially if the Church green is freed for passive recreation. A far more appropriate use would be for an active recreation area for the Timilty School. In either case, the occupied residential structure would be incompatible with recreation use and should be taken.

Parking

There is no justification for public off-street parking in this location.

Dillaway Thomas House

The RAP plan calls for rehabilitation of the Dillaway Thomas House as well as landscaping improvements. Although the Urban Renewal Plan did not specifically mention its rehabilitation, the site plan indicates its retention even though no money was allocated for its retention. Because of its historic and architectural value, coupled with the programmed and planned activity in the area and a reasonable re-use provided by the Museum of Afro-American Studies, there is no question that this structure should be rehabilitated by the City.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

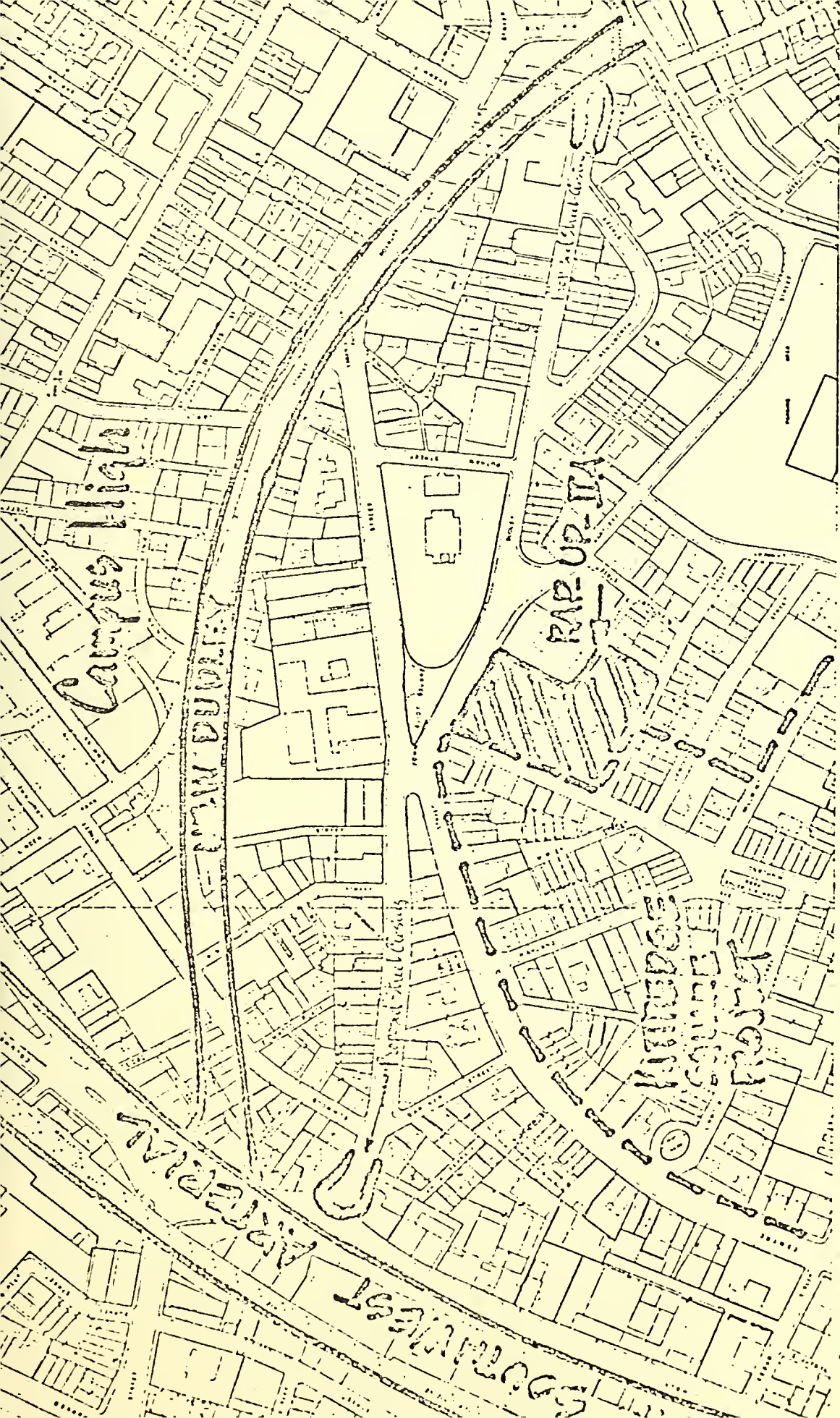
In summary, therefore, the Planning Department recommends the following strategies for the long and short run.

Long Run

- Pursue the concept of the pedestrian plaza in front of RAP-UP-IIA.
(BRA, PFD)

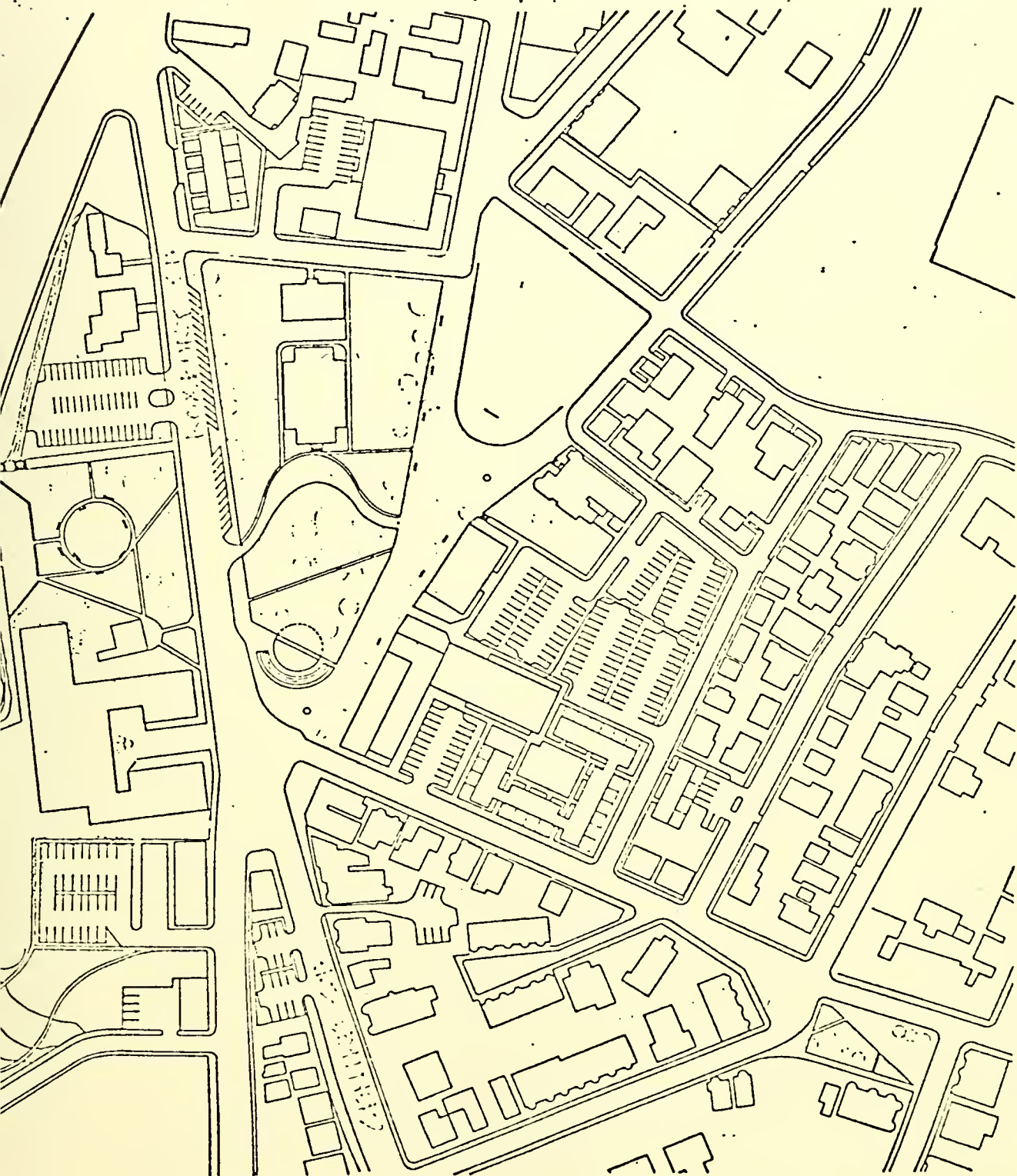
Short Run

- Once the traffic pattern is finalized (2-3 years), the City should temporarily close Dudley Street on an experimental basis. (Traffic and Parking)
- New pedestrian lighting should be installed along Dudley Street from Highland Avenue to Blanchard Street and in front of the Cox Building from Blanchard to Putnam. (Bi-Centennial Funding)
- Provide for tree planting in front of RAP-UP-IIA. (Bi-Centennial or Operating Budget of Parks Department)
- Develop a play area for the Timilty School. (To be developed by the School Department or Parks Department)
- Restore the Dillaway Thomas House including landscaping. (PFD, Mass Historical Commission)
(B.R.A. Urban Design Department can prepare designs for tree planting, lighting, and the park.)



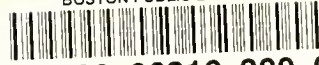
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